

816. m. 14  
37.  
Egg

## Reasons humbly propounded against Dissolving the Antient Revenue arising by Wine-Licences, and Imposing Twenty Shillings, or any other Sum, upon a Tun of Wine, in lieu thereof, to be paid by the Merchant.

309

**T**HE Wine-Merchants trade up to the height of their (greatly) impaired Stock and Credit; and though the addition of 20 s. upon a Tun of Wine may seem small, yet it will subtract no less than 26000 l. *per annum* out of the Merchants Stock, which they must pay in lieu of about 12 or 13000 l. *per annum*, which the Vintners now pay for their Wine-Licences: for that Revenue (as we are credibly informed) yields no more. The Merchants Payment of the said 26000 l. will enforce them for want thereof, to trade for 100000 l. *per annum* less than now they do; which will not only be their loss, but the King also will suffer in the Customs.

2. The Customs upon Wines are already so high, that the Merchants after all their great Charge, Hazards, Losses in Forraign Parts, by Sea, and after Arrival, are forced to sell their choicest Wines at the Retailers Prizes, for Money to pay the Customs; which Wine they Compound and Mix with mean decaying Wines and other Ingredients, to their great advantage. The addition of 26000 l. *per annum*, will prove an exceeding Pressure upon the Merchants, and no less difficult for them to raise, and multiply their Necessities, and further enable Retailers of Wine to prey upon them, and to encrease the said evil Compositions.

3. That a Grant of Tunnage upon Merchants Importation of Wine or any other Commodities, was never granted to any in *England*, but to the King as Sovereign Lord, for protecting them in their Traffick at Sea and Land; nor is it granted to any other Person in any Part or Place in the World, where we have been or traded, but to the Sovereign, upon this general equity of Protecting them in their Commerce. And we humbly hope this Honourable House will not be prevailed with to make a President herein to free the Vintners from paying their Antient Duty for Wine-Licences.

4. The Customs upon Wines are already so exceeding high (even above the first Cost thereof) that Forraign Princes have taken notice, and complained thereof; and we doubt not but that a constant additional payment upon the Importers of Wine will occasion and induce those Princes to encrease their Customs upon our Commodities and Manufactures imported into their Kingdoms; and so the Merchant will not only suffer a double Mischief and Ruine, and Trade thereby be impaired, but also the whole Kingdom will sustain great Loss and Damage in Vending their Commodities and Manufactures.

5. If the Revenue of Wine-Licences be Dissolved, the Number of Vintners will be excessive. In *Anno* 1636, when *England* abounded most in Wealth, there were not above 2500 Taverns; and Wines were Bought Cheap beyond Sea, and not for Ready Money, but in Barter for other Commodities. During the Disorders, all who would Sold Wine without Licence; and though the Warrs had exhausted the Kingdom, yet about *Anno* 1660, the Number of Vintners were encreased unto above 4800, which occasioned Wine to be Bought at Enhanced Prizes, and not in Barter, but mostly for Ready Money, which is one of the Leaks through which much of our Wealth for these last 25 Years hath issued.

6. The Revenue of Wine-Licences proceedeth not out of the Sober use of Wine in the Houses of the Nobility and Gentry, who usually have their Wines at the First hand, but upon the more Extravagant expence thereof in Taverns, and there also nothing is Imposed, but every man doth Limit his own Expence and Payments; But if this Revenue be Dissolved, and 20 s. *per Tun*, which is double the Value thereof, be Imposed upon the Merchant, it will reach all Persons and Uses without distinction.

7. The Retailers of Wine were become so Numerous and Skilful in that hurtful Art of Vitiating Wine, that the Act of *Duodecimo Caroli Secundi*, Investing the Crown with this Revenue of Wine-Licences, doth not only Restraine the Number, by appointing them to Pay for Licences, but also doth somewhat Chastise them for their said unlawful Practises: But if this Revenue of Wine-Licences be Dissolved, then the Number of Vintners will encrease, to the Debauching and Consuming of the Subject, and the said Castigation will be Removed.

8. The Profits arising by Wine-Licences, is an Antient Revenue belonging to the Crown, and though (till of Late) Imposed only by Prerogative, yet it appeared so manifestly Equal and Necessary, that it was admitted without the least Opposition in the most Stormy and Adverse Times; Therefore it is hoped the Retailers of Wine shall not be discharged from paying this their Antient Duty, which hath endured all Weathers, and an Imposition of double the Value laid upon the Depressed Merchants.

9. The Revenue of Wine-Licences ariseth out of the Vast Gains of Retailers of Wine, whose beginnings though very Mean, yet in short time they arrive to great Estates, and are observed within these last 25 Years (wherein all other Traders have decayed) to have made more Purchases than any other Traders in *England*; yet by their earnest Applications, we have cause to fear they will bring upon us a heavy Additional Duty, and also design to encrease the same to free themselves from paying for Licences.

10. The Merchants Estates are usually either in Forraign Parts, or in Retailers hands, or else Floating on the Seas, and exposed to amazing Hazzards, and themselves possess of little else than empty Ware-Houses, and cannot procure Money as Retailers of Wine may, who not only take much Ready Money, but also having their Cellars full of Wine, can value themselves thereon at pleasure: If the Merchant, though under this disadvantage, must find Money to pay high Customs, and also this vast Additional Duty; Yet it is hoped the same shall not be encreased, to free Retailers of Wine from paying their Antient Duty of Wine-Licences.

11. The Revenue of Wine-Licences, as now placed, is to be paid by about 3000 Persons who are Retailers of Wine, which can hardly be felt amongst so many whose Stock is at least ten times greater, than the Wine Merchants: but if in lieu of the Revenue of Wine-Licences, an Imposition be upon the Merchant, the same will be paid out of the Purse of a very few whose Stock is small, and already very much burthened, and will be to them an exceeding Addition to their present Payments and Sufferings, and but little for the Retailers to pay, and no more than what they paid Antiently.

12. That now the Merchants, when their Market for Wine is at the Worst, have yet two sorts of Customers to take them off, *viz.* Free-Vintners, and those who are not free; between whom there is some Emulation, which is often useful to the Merchants, saving them from a Necessity of Selling their Wines upon the Free-Vintners Terms: but if the Revenue of Wine-Licences be dissolved, all those that are not Free-Vintners (who are more than those that are Free-Vintners) will be utterly suppressed, and themselves and Families dispoiled of their Trade and Livelihood, and the Merchants exposed to be preyed upon by the Free-Vintners, who then will have too great opportunity to raise themselves unto an exceeding Oppulency.

13. If the Revenue arising by Wine-Licences be Dissolved, it will Infringe the Antient Liberties and Priviledges of all the Corporations in *England*, who have Power by the Act of 7. *Edw.* 6. to grant Licences unto Retailers to Sell Wine, and the Benefit thereof enures unto the Poor of the said Corporations, who will not only be thereby deprived, but also very many Patentees (who have paid great Sums for their Patents; and (as we are informed) have now, in consideration thereof, some good Allowance in the Rent of their Wine-Licences) for they who have Patents; and they who have None, will be equally Free to Retail Wine, to the Prejudice of the Wealth and Welfare of the Kingdom.

### Objection.

We know it will be Objected, *That when Trade is Free and Open, it becomes most Profitable both to King and Subject.*

### Answer.

This holds true in Merchandize, generally useful and necessary; but where the Merchandize is a Costly and Luxurious Superfluity, the more free the Trade is, the more it Consumeth and Destroyeth the Subject, who had better give the King treble the value of what he may have by opening such a Trade, than to have so much Wealth consumed in so great a Superfluity. And if it be necessary by Licences to Restraine the Number of Traders in Ale and Beer, a native, necessary and cheap Commodity, and less apt to produce Excesse; then surely it is much more necessary by Licences to Restraine the Number of Vintners, who deal in a Costly, Luxurious, Forraign Commodity, which tendeth much more to Excess.